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World Bank: Over 1,100,000 face acute food insecurity in S/Leone



President Bio (right) and the Acting Bank Governor launching the National Payment Switch

National Payment Switch: Is it effectively functional?



Senior Agriculture Specialist at World Bank, Adetunji A. Oredipe
By Hassan Gbassay Koroma

UN Warns of Escalation in Arms Transfers in Ukraine Conflict



Adedeji Ebo, Director of UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, Calls for International Cooperation

LRMG empowers SL with Job opportunities

World Bank Sierra Leone's 2023 Economic Update has revealed that the number of people facing acute food insecurity in Sierra Leone was surging, rising from 788,000 in January 2023 to 1,100,000 in August 2023. According to Senior Agriculture Specialist at World Bank, Adetunji A. Oredipe, the number of chronically food-insecure people was also growing, both in absolute and relative terms. He made the above revelation while making a presentation at the official launch of the World Bank Sierra Leone 2023 Economic Update at the Sierra Palm Hotel, Aberdeen, in Freetown with the theme 'Enhancing Value Chains to Boost Food Security.'

Cont. Page 4

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LOCAL NEWS National Payment Switch: Is it effectively functional?

By Alfred Koroma

As early as 7 am, crowds of people standing in front of various commercial banks on the busy streets of Freetown. Some doctors, lawyers, students applying for University, and some teachers, waiting for banks to open at 9 am to get out cash. The queues continue inside. To succeed requires an extra patient from customers, often at their detriment. It's either you fail to go to your office early and spend the rest of the day waiting to reach the cashiers or quit without cash, a typical epitome of the banking sector in Sierra Leone.

Despite rise in digital payment worldwide, banking in Sierra Leone remain largely analogue with payment predominantly cash-based as vast majority of citizens cannot utilize the digital products banks offer.

Amidst this enigma, Bank of Sierra Leone launched a new payment system dubbed as National Payment Switch in May 2023, as an infrastructure to promote cashless

banking, end limitations in access to finance and enhance financial inclusion through universal interaction with banks, POS, ATMs and Mobile Payment operators.

Banks in Sierra Leone have been operating on their own. Each bank holds its own ATM and POS, requiring customers to obtain multiple cards from different banks. This has been the case even for mobile payment operators in the country.

With its launching, the national payment switch was presented as an infrastructure to end the payment barrier, allowing banks and other payment companies to interface and work with each other, so people are able to withdraw money from any of the six banks with their ATM card even if they do not hold an account with that bank.

The same would apply to mobile money, allowing telecommunication service providers to interoperate and make digital cash transaction across all networks possible.

Launched but not functioning



President Bio (right) and the Acting Bank Governor launching the National Payment Switch

President Bio referred to the launching of the switch as "the start of new era in our internal banking and financial services sector." the new infrastructure will cover processing of card transactions carried out through point-of-sale and Automated Teller Machines managed by different financial institutions. And "...yet another bold step forward towards actualizing my SLPP Government's "New Direction" Manifesto."

Five months after its launching, the national switch which is believed to be at its first phase, working among six out of the 14 commercial banks, does not appear to be working. It's rare to find people who have knowledge about the switch, let alone say they are using it.

"The switch itself has not started working. The launching was just a test case." But it has been presented to the public as though it is working, a banker told me.

Three separate ATM cards tested at three of the banks on separate days and weeks proved unsuccessful with the response: "Issuer or switch

inoperative. Please take your card." All efforts were exhausted to reach Bank of Sierra Leone to know about the status of the switch, but the Bank refused to speak.

Challenges

But let say the switch start working in the near future, still a larger portion of the population stands to be excluded from the benefits the product, as larger area of the country remain unbanked. Only 19.8 percent of the population is has access to formal financial services and mobile money, according to a publication by the UN Impact for Capital Development.

And those with access to formal banking services still prefer the traditional methods of banking – going to the bank physically, joining long queues to deposit or withdraw physical cash.

Other perennial challenges – lack of awareness, low digital skill gap, limited network connectivity are all allied factors brazing to undermine the effectiveness of the payment switch.



An ATM of one of the five banks believed to be operating the National Payment Switch. An attempt to withdraw cash using two separate ATM cards of the switch went unsuccessful.



Kroo Town Road Market, Freetown

LOCAL NEWS National Payment Switch: Is it effectively functional?

From Page 2

An interview with several customers waiting at various commercial banks in the morning hours, public transport representatives, University students and market women at major markets and streets within the capital Freetown reveals the public is in fact, less knowledgeable about the new payment system, its benefits and how it works. At Kroo Town Road Market in the central area of the city, one fruit and vegetable trader claims to have heard about the payment switch, but appears to hold a different view against it. For her, such infrastructure that allows people to withdraw money from a bank where they do not have an account should not exist.

"I've heard about the National Payment System, but I have no interest in it," the trader told me. "As far as I'm concerned, everyone should collect money where they have an account. It is crook to collect money where you don't have an account. Thank God I don't keep money in my account."

But there are others who said they want to use the switch, but have no knowledge on how it operates.

Also, citizens with accounts outside those six banks where the switch is said to be operating cannot benefit from the payment system. Except at the second phase where it is expected to extend, allowing mobile payment interoperability.

But even when the implementation of the switch would have reached all the stages, Ngene thinks the major challenge the payment system would face has to do with its general acceptability and awareness.

Additionally, as Alhiji Lewally, Head of IT, Rokel Commercial Bank reechoes have do with inadequate power supply, internet connectivity in certain parts of the country where banks have branches. If an ATM is in a location wherein there is a break in communication and customer goes to

that ATM, that transaction will not be able to be routed to the switch because of communication break. Which moved me to further seek views on how the switch would work effectively.

Mass production of payment cards
Few account holders in Sierra Leone use cards to perform transactions. The availability of cards is to some extent still bureaucratic. In many cases, people are feeling frightened to acquire cards from banks. The common notion is that a customer need to have huge amount of cash in his or her account to access an ATM, credit or a master card. Online banking and debit card penetration in the country is still low, projected to have reached 1.43% and 1.62% in 2023 respectively, according to Statista.

This is what they need to demystify and ensure people have the confidence that this is a common card that every man can have.

It's a challenge that government need to demystify and ensure people have the confidence that this is a common card that every man can acquire. That would help the switch should work effectively.

There should be a mass production of payment cards for the whole country and make them available to everyone with an account. And ensure everybody in the country is able to use a card and other digital payment products available.

Victor Jones, an investigative journalist, thinks this is the first step government should have taken before launching a national payment switch or linking banks in the country.

"The more ATMs we have in the country, the lesser the crowd we have at banks to withdraw cash. From there government can come with a scheme that talks about a national switch," Jones said. "At the time, even that fish woman in the market has an ATM and understands how to use it."

Narrow digital divide

Even before the launch of the National Payment Switch, the future of payment in Sierra Leone has begun evolving, requiring digital capabilities, behaviours and understanding for citizens.

In terms of access, a lot more Sierra Leoneans, particularly those in urban settlements, are having access to digital technologies such as smartphones, mobile computers at a growing rate. But there is still a widening of digital divide in terms of skills. Much of the population lack the basic skills needed to confidently perform financial transactions digitally.

Even though mobile payment has existed in the country for over a decade, people still hand their phones and password to agents to transfer or cash out money. That's a big challenge and a big risk.

There is a rise of Fin-Tech companies and the use of POS machines in different businesses. Therefore, narrowing digital skill gap would not only help the national payment switch work more effectively, but also boost the country's economy and enhance inclusion, Savrabh Mehta, Academic Head, Blue Crest, ICT University in Sierra Leone.

"Closing the digital skills gap can foster innovation, entrepreneurship and the growth of digital businesses, thereby contributing to economic development and job creation across various sectors," Mehta added.

A lot of Sierra Leoneans still queue at the banks, probably because the country have not got an effective digital payment system and the nitty-gritties required to fully adopt digital payment. But education, with more investment in infrastructure – improving access to reliable internet connectivity and expanding infrastructure that narrows the gap between the bank and unbanked areas, in both rural and urban settings can leverage the potential of switch.

It is not clear when the government's national switch will function. However, if the infrastructure ever function, it will be better appreciated if the people are able to use their mobile phones, their cards, computers at the comfort of their homes to do purchasing and perform transactions. . This will have unimpeachable effect on the drive for financial inclusivity the nation is gearing to achieve.

This report was produced under the DPI Africa Journalism Fellowship Programme, organized by the Media Foundation for West Africa with support from Co-Develop.



Customers waiting in front of Sierra Leone Commercial Bank

Public Education

In this age of advance technology, the payment switch can help reduce crowd in banks if only people know about it and are able to use the various digital products the infrastructure provides. But it's clear so far, sensitization around the scheme is not common.

And as Jones, put it: Even the term 'National Payment Switch' is too complex for the people to comprehend.

For easy understanding, he suggests the use of light terms, a name that rings through and evokes a national interest.

Then Education, Alhiji Lewally, Head of IT, Rokel Commercial Bank said is the key for the payment switch to work effectively, emphasizing more sensitization, more education is needed to let people have confidence to use the payment switch.

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LOCAL NEWS

By Ibrahim Kabba Turay

As part of their 78 years celebration, the United Nations in Sierra Leone has embarked on a massive cleaning at Lumley Beach.

The initiative brought together UN staff and other development partners, to promote responsible waste management and preservation of natural resources.

The beach clean-up also promoted cooperation and team-building, while raising public awareness on the impact of plastic and other forms of waste in the ocean and the role that each can play in addressing that global issue.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone, Babatunde Ahonsi, speaking to journalists, said the beach clean-up was what they always do as part of their effort to support the government and the people of Sierra Leone.

He said they were doing the beach cleaning-up to be able to solve the impact of climate change, adding that one of the agencies, the International Migration Organization (IOM), has been doing it regularly.

He maintained that they thought that one of the ways to mark the 78 years celebration was to join the IOM to clean up the beaches.

He continued that all the UN family



UN R.C in Sierra Leone, Babatunde Ahonsi, and the UN family doing the cleaning

in Sierra Leone were present and were part of the cleaning, adding that that was what they did as UN to ensure Sierra Leone develops climate resilience and for the country to take advantage of their natural resources to advance its development priorities. He further said that, it's not a one-off exercise and that they will continue to support the project because the IOM was doing it regularly.

He added that that was part of what

they did to ensure that climate action is an important part of the responses and intervention for them to achieve the natural priorities of the country. "When a country takes care of its environment, the environment will be better for them, and the communities and country at large. Taking care of nature is everyone's responsibility, is not just for government, NGO or the UN, when we all do our bit, the environment will

be a better place," he said

He urged Sierra Leoneans who are in the habit of using and throwing, to start thinking about circular economic, how to transition waste to wealth.

He added that he is happy the IOM and the UNDP were also working on that to see how they can use the waste generated and turn them into a viable product.

World Bank: Over 1,100,000 face acute food insecurity in S/Leone

From Cover

He said the progress in cutting undernutrition is a key indicator of food insecurity and has stalled alongside unstable income growth and low progress in other key areas including healthcare, sanitation and other areas.

He said Sierra Leone's food supply is dominated by cereals and other starchy staples, citing rice as the dominant cereal and cassava as the main root crop.

He stated that the average dietary energy supply appears adequate on aggregate, but trending downward and lies well below Africa and global levels.

He said the average protein supply was also low, falling, and well below Africa and global levels.

He said Sierra Leone's per capita production of several foods compared favourably with neighbouring West African countries and Sierra Leone has become increasingly dependent on food imports, especially for rice, its major food staple.

He presented that food access income levels and market systems are the primary determinant of access to food

for most households, and that food is increasingly costly and adequate diets increasingly unaffordable.

He said child stunting and wasting rates are unacceptably high with poor utilization linked to poor access to health care and water and sanitation.

He said depending on the crop, domestic production appears to be subject to different policy-related price incentives and disincentives and all crops face high marketing costs.

The World Bank Specialist said rice productivity is low, especially compared to countries with comparably high levels of per capita consumption and despite low productivity, net returns for key crops are positive, but with varying distribution of returns across value chains.

He said food security in Sierra Leone will be achieved when economic growth has raised the poor above a meaningful poverty line, and when stabilization of the agri-food system prevents exogenous shocks from threatening their food intake.

He said in the face of high and

increasingly volatile prices in global markets, rice self-sufficiency may seem like obvious policy objective, but reality is more complex.

He said experience from Asia indicates that rice self-sufficiency is technically feasible, through trade barriers and domestic price controls backed by food reserve stock management.

He said food sufficiency achievement is costly, both fiscally and in forgone economic opportunities and only to the extent that competitiveness can be achieved in a short amount of time.

If greater rice self-sufficiency is to be pursued, he said it must be driven by rapid and broad-based productivity growth in the rice value chain to boost its underlying competitiveness and climate resilience.

He said in Sierra Leone's small open economy, macroeconomic stability built on fiscal and monetary discipline is essential to both food security in the short- to medium-term and growth and poverty reduction over the long-term.

He further noted that Sierra Leone's fiscal constraints imply limited scope



for public financing of market-oriented food security-enhancing investments and the private sector must be supported and empowered to undertake the required investments in Sierra.

The 2023 Sierra Leone Economic Update emphasizes that the government's reform agenda for the agricultural sector needs to consist of policy shifts that bring about greater gains in productivity, including investments in export-oriented cash crops (cocoa, coffee, ginger, and palm seed) to generate foreign exchange, and investments in the production and marketing of rice to boost food security through rice self-sufficiency.



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LOCAL NEWS UN Warns of Escalation in Arms Transfers in Ukraine Conflict

New York, October 27, 2023 – Amid the ongoing violence in Ukraine, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs has sounded the alarm regarding the increasing flow of weapons into the conflict.

In a briefing to the United Nations Security Council on October 27, Adedeji Ebo, the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, expressed deep concerns about the "supply of weapons and ammunition into armed conflict situations, raising significant worries about the potential escalation of violence."

Mr. Ebo emphasized the urgent need "for an immediate end to the use of these indiscriminate and devastating weapons, which have long-lasting impacts on innocent civilians even after conflicts have ended."

The weapons being funneled into the conflict include "heavy conventional

weaponry, including battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, combat aircraft, helicopters, large-caliber artillery systems, missile systems, uncrewed combat aerial vehicles, remotely operated munitions, small arms, light weapons, and their corresponding ammunition."

He also drew attention to reports related to the transfer of depleted-uranium tank ammunition to Ukrainian forces.

Furthermore, there have been reports of plans to transfer uncrewed aerial vehicles and ammunition to the Russian armed forces for potential use in Ukraine, intensifying worries about the escalation of violence.

Citing figures from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Ebo noted that approximately 9,806 civilians have been killed in the conflict, with 17,962 injured between February 24, 2022,

and October 8, 2023. He emphasized that this figure is likely to be higher.

Reiterating that the Ukraine conflict, initiated by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, violates international law and the UN Charter, Mr. Ebo called for all arms transfers to strictly adhere to the applicable international legal framework, including relevant Security Council resolutions, to prevent further destabilization in the region.

He also urged States to consider acceding to international conventions that prohibit such weapons.

Mr. Ebo's briefing highlighted the critical need for measures to counter the potential diversion of weapons and ammunition, which could undermine post-conflict recovery and regional stability. He underscored the importance of international



Adedeji Ebo, Director of UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, Calls for International Cooperation

cooperation in preventing the illicit flow of arms and diversion.

The briefing served as a stark reminder of the urgent necessity for international cooperation to address this growing challenge in Ukraine.

Over 400 students orientate at Limkokwing

Ishmael Dumbuya



The Limkokwing University of Creative Technology and Innovation has yesterday, 30th October, held an orientation ceremony for over 400 freshmen that are due to attend this academic year, on the theme; "Over 7 years of Driving Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Transformation," at the university's campus on Hill Station in Freetown.

In his keynote address at the ceremony, Hon. Abdul Murray Conteh, commended the over 400 freshmen for choosing the university, adding that it's a decision that cannot be regretted, as the university is among the best in the country.

He went on to underscore that the university has operated over 7 years, and since then they have been doing absolutely well academically as well as preparing students to meet the many competitive challenges in the job market.

He explained that Linkokwing University of Creative Technology is an international University with a global presence across 3 continents.

He said the university was established in 1991 by founder and President, Tan Sri Dato Sri Paduka Dr. Limkokwing.

He concluded that the university has over 30,000 students coming from more than 165 countries,

studying in its 13 campuses in Botswana, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lesotho, Malaysia, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and United Kingdom.

"Its main campus is in Malaysia. Limkokwing University has established worldwide recognition through its innovative brand of creative education merging the best of East and West education," he said.

According to Aiah James, the University's Registrar, Limkokwing University Sierra Leone campus was established by the Ernest Bai Koroma administration with the aim of transforming the tertiary education landscape and to help meet the country's high demand for graduates in the field of digital technology.

"The university opens its new campus in Sierra Leone in 2014, but through the Ebola scourge, the University started its transformation in 2016 by creating the most high-tech learning environment to empower students with the latest in digital technology," he stated.

He further stated that the university was officially opened by the former president of Sierra Leone, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, on 18 March 2017.

"The University has the honor of being Sierra Leones first foreign university. It offers creativity-centered courses. This is in line

with the country's vision to produce graduates that will go on to become technology-savvy movers and shakers of the society. At the Limkokwing University, a student from even the most remote part of Sierra Leone will become a technology competent individual who is creative and innovative. It is a global tertiary University that blends holistic education with industry-driven skills," the registrar mentioned.

In an interview with this medium, Hassan Kamara, from the university's Faculty of Communication, Media and Broadcasting, said Limkokwing is a blessing to Sierra Leoneans because it helps impart digital and technological know-how in students.

He ended that in 2014, the University first cohort number of students went through the rigorous admission process before they were issued admission letters.

"The first and second batch of students applied to the Ministry of Education for government Grant-in-aid and went through interviews before they are finally awarded letters of Scholarship ranging from Diploma to Degree courses," he said.

The orientation ceremony ended on departmental briefings, statements from heads of faculties, and the university's choir made some performances as a way of welcoming the freshmen.

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LOCAL NEWS **Sierra Leone's ambition for mobile healthcare is raised with the presence of Mercy Ship**

During a visit Friday to the Mercy Ship docked at Queen Elizabeth 11 Quay in Freetown since August this year, United Nations Resident Coordinator (RC), Mr Babatunde Ahonsi, said the UN Country Team is uplifted by the difference that the service rendered by the Ship known as the Global Mercy is making to the surrounding community, to benefiting patients, and to Sierra Leone.

During a tour conducted by Mercy Ship's Country Director, Dr Sandra Lako, of the eleven-deck world's largest non-governmental hospital ship, the RC said that for the individuals benefiting from the surgeries, the experience is life-transforming and that the boost to specialized human resources for health in the country through the training component could be significant.

Through Dr Lako, the RC congratulated the 641 volunteers comprising medical, technical, and general personnel, 300 of whom are from Sierra Leone, for the work they continue to do till June next year when the Ship is expected to depart the shores of Sierra Leone.

"I hope the country appreciates the

difference it has made," Mr Ahonsi said, adding that Sierra Leone is lucky to have the Global Mercy Ship around.

After a briefing on the traineeship opportunities that the medical practitioners in the country, especially from the Connaught Hospital, will benefit from during the Ship's stay in Sierra Leone, Mr Ahonsi emphasized that he hopes that it will help raise the level of ambition for mobile health care in the country. "Anything that helps to strengthen healthcare delivery is good for Sierra Leone," he said.

In responding, Dr Lako said that the need for surgical care, both in Freetown and upcountry, could be addressed to a certain extent by mobile clinics and indicated that it is great that the Ship's visit has encouraged others to be more focused on engaging in mobile healthcare. For now, she does not think this would be a particular area that Mercy Ships would get involved in.

On their collaboration with the Connaught Hospital, she said, "Mercy Ships is working in



partnership with Connaught Hospital to strengthen surgical care. This programme is still being developed together with our partners. We also have surgical and anaesthetic doctors and nurses from Connaught Hospital rotating on board for training and shared learning opportunities," she said.

For ten months, according to Dr Lako, the Ship will provide some 2,350 safe and free surgeries on board to Sierra Leoneans, and it will include safe surgical and dental care, as well as advanced medical training and mentoring.

She said she was grateful for the visit led by the RC and accompanied by the Heads of FAO, Mr Saeed Bancie, and UNIDO, Mrs Mariatu Swaray. "We are grateful we are in a country where our services are appreciated," the Country Director said.

The team had the opportunity to meet with the Captain of the Ship and also visited the hospital and learning academy, among others.

Mercy Ship came to Sierra Leone due to an invitation by the Government, and it marks the sixth instance of the collaboration between the Ship and the country.

LRMG empowers SL with Job opportunities

Addressing the unemployment challenges faced by the Sierra Leonean population, the government has made a wise decision by choosing to partner with Leone Rock Metal Group (LRMG). The partnership is set to bring about a significant increase in job opportunities, benefiting the country as a whole.

With an impressive track record, LRMG has already created a staggering 5,200 jobs for Sierra Leoneans. Furthermore, an additional 1,000 jobs are in the pipeline for Port Alone, showcasing the company's commitment to the growth and prosperity of the nation. This strategic move is poised to have a direct and positive impact on the local workforce.

In contrast, the government had an alternative option on the table - a proposal from Arise IIP, which promised 5,000 jobs over the course of a 25-year lease. However, the government astutely recognized that LRMG's proposal offered a superior advantage in terms of job creation and immediate impact.

By prioritizing the needs of its citizens, the government has made a sound judgment that will undoubtedly benefit the entire nation. The decision to choose LRMG over Arise IIP not only secures more job opportunities for Sierra Leoneans but also safeguards the country's long-term economic interests.

The partnership with LRMG guarantees a progressive and sustainable future for Sierra Leone. The company's commitment to job creation, coupled with its proven track record, instills confidence in the government's decision. Sierra Leoneans can now look forward to a brighter future, with increased employment opportunities and economic growth.

LRMG's dedication to empowering the local workforce aligns perfectly with the government's vision of fostering economic development. Their investment in Sierra Leone will undoubtedly contribute to a thriving labor market, providing stability and hope for countless individuals and families.

As the news of this partnership spreads, it is likely to generate enthusiasm among local communities, instilling a renewed sense of optimism and pride. Sierra Leoneans can now rest assured that their government is actively working towards their well-being and striving to create a prosperous future for all.

In conclusion, the government's choice to partner with Leone Rock Metal Group (LRMG) stands as a testament to their commitment to putting the country's interests first. By prioritizing job creation and economic growth, this decision will undoubtedly benefit Sierra Leoneans.

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Call for Proposals for Grants

Title: Call for Proposals for a Grant - Grant to Establish and Train WASH Committees on the Savings and Loan Scheme for the Management of Water Facilities in the Targeted Locations in Karene and Kambia Districts.

Supervisor: UNDP Sustainable Local and Economic Development Cluster

Deadline: 6th November 2023

Duration of the Activity: Two Months

Location: Sierra Leone

Bidders can download the bid documents from the UNDP Procurement website at: <https://procurement-notice.undp.org/>

Timing and Contacts

- Proposals should be submitted via email to procure.sle@undp.org no later than **6th November 2023**.
- Queries to this call for proposals can be submitted via email to procure.sle@undp.org before **6th November 2023**.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this grant selection process is to identify a suitable local Nonprofit organization (CSO/NGO/Foundation) with operational presence and specialized expertise to establish 30 water management committees and train members on the VSLA technique including the ability to sustain water infrastructure at community sites, the ability to do basic repairs to damaged infrastructure in 30 communities in the following locations in Kailahun and Karene districts:

Kailahun District

- Malema (Joiioima)
- Mandu (Buedu & Mobai)
- Kissi Teng (Buedu Market)
- Lauwa (Kailahun town: GTI, Jaka Magorma)
- Kpeje Bongre (Manowa)
- Peje West (Bunumbu)
- Dea (Baiwalla and Senga)
- Kissi Teng (Bayama Leylah)
- Jawei (Nyima and Daru town)
- Upper Bambara (Pendembu)

Karene District

- Sella Limba (Kamakwe I&III, Kaba Ferry)
- Sanda Loko (Kaindema & Kamalo)
- Lebesay Gbahun (Batkanu & Rothanta)
- Sanda Taindaren (Rogboreh & Massissan)
- Mafonda Makarembay (Gbonka)
- Romende (Foredugu)
- Buya (Rosint)
- Gbinti (Makulon, Mofonda, & Makombrey)

The grant amount is **USD 60,000**. The grant is not able to fund provision of direct services or operating/running costs unrelated to proposed activities as outlined in this call. The grant must be executed within a period of not more than two months from the time of signing the contract.

Who Can Apply

- Local Non-profit organizations (CSO/NGO/Foundation)
- The NGO is required to have at least 5 years comprehensive grasp of Operation and Maintenance (O&M) and Water management techniques of

pipelines and boreholes, applied professional experience in conducting training on basic topics, and must be able to provide flexible course delivery to meet the participants and organizations' needs. For this consultancy, all relevant disasters in the Sierra Leonean context must be considered happening to the water points/wells.

- Minimum 5 years of relevant experience in VSLA trainings, including familiarity with sustainability models in the water sector.
- Organizations should have operational presence in the targeted area – Kailahun and Karene districts.
- Organizations should be registered in accordance with the legal requirements of the Government of Sierra Leone.
- Organizations may submit joint proposals as coalitions. In this case, main applicants must provide support letters from relevant co-applicants specifying their respective role. In case of joint proposals, the main applicant shall have proven experience in the proposed area of programming for the grant.

Procedures of Grant Proposal Submission

Those wishing to apply to Grants, must submit:

- Signed Grants Proposal populated template (See annex A)
- Organization Synopsis
- CVs of all project staff who will be dedicated to the proposed grant activity.
- Workplan, performance targets.

Only one submission per organization is allowed. Once the application is complete and submitted, revised versions of proposal documents will not be accepted.

A- Evaluation criteria or Scoring system:

Proposals will be evaluated by a Grant Appraisal Committee against the following main criteria:

- Operational presence and establishment in target location for at least 12 months
- The Organization should demonstrate the ability to effectively manage grant funds, as well as the institutional capacity (equipment, facilities, competence, and qualified personnel necessary for project implementation.
- Comprehensiveness of the proposal - Plan and budget: The proposal should clearly define its strategy for implementation detailing a step-by-step project plan and itemized budget, clear timelines for grant activity duration (up to maximum three months).
- Competence of the organization's staff with qualified with required specialized skills in related field.
- The grant will be payable in local currency at the prevailing UN official exchange rate.

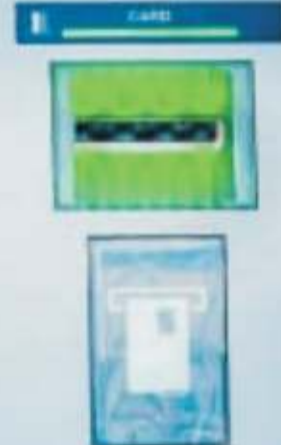
Summary of Technical and Financial Proposal Evaluation criteria		Score Weight	Points Obtainable
1.	Organization eligibility and qualifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization mandated to provide required services, legally registered with proof of youth leadership (5 points) Organizational experience in Operation and Maintenance (O&M) and Water management techniques of pipelines and boreholes (10 points) Establishment in target location (5 points) 	20%	20
2.	Proposed methodology, approach and implementation plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriateness to assignment (10 points) Realistic of the implementation plan (10 points) Inclusiveness of the proposed methodology (10 points) 	30%	30
3.	Management structure and key personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations structure suitable to the assignment (5 points) Qualifications of Team Leader (5 points) Qualifications of Technical staff (5 points) Qualifications of Support staff (5 points) 	20%	20
4.	Financial proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed budget (10 points) Complete (10 points) Realistic budget (10 points) 	30%	30
Total			100

HOW TO APPLY

Applicants must submit a detailed proposal via email to procure.sle@undp.org not later than **6th November 2023**.



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NOTIFICATION FOR THE PUBLIC DISCLOSURE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (ESIA) FOR ENHANCING CLIMATE INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT IN SIERRA LEONE UNDER THE FREETOWN WASH AND AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT REVAMPING PROJECT (WASHAERP)

This notice serves to inform interested and/or affected persons/parties (I&APs) about the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for Enhancing Climate Information Systems for Resilient Development in Sierra Leone under the Freetown WASH and Aquatic Environment Revamping Project (WASHAERP). The Enhancing Climate Information Systems for Resilient Development in Sierra Leone with funding from the Green Climate Fund will be implemented by Guma Valley Water Company and other implementing partners such as the Sierra Leone Meteorological Agency (SLMet) and the National Water Resources Management Agency (NWRMA). The project primarily involves the

1. Installing automatic weather and hydrological stations;
2. Conserving and restoring important habitats, such as mangroves and wetlands;
3. Investing in solar energy systems to provide a reliable and stable power source for better hydromet services; and
4. Creating operational guidelines for the National Framework for Environmental Quality.

The project warrants an ESIA which depicts the associated environmental, social, health impacts of the project as stipulated in the EPA Act, 2008.

In compliance with the laws of Sierra Leone, project activities need to be carried out in manner that minimizes the potential negative social and environmental and maximizes the benefits.

This can be achieved through the ESIA process which the Consultant, ABC Safety Consult have undertaken.

The ESIA report is now presented to interested and/or affected persons/parties for discussion and finalization during a public disclosure session for discussion at:

Venue: Regent Community Centre, Regent, Freetown

Date: Tuesday, 31st October, 2023

Time: 9:30am

The general public and other key stakeholders are hereby invited to participate in the consultation process for this project. Your input and any issues or insights regarding this project will be valuable in the specialist investigations. Comments can be submitted verbally at the stakeholders' workshop or in written format. Written comments can be sent to ABC Safety Consult, 7 Rush Street, Freetown via email to abcsafetyconsults@gmail.com the addresses provided below. We look forward to your participation in the consultation and disclosure process.

Consultant: ABC Safety Consult's

Tel: +23231982355/ +23280108206

Email: abcsafetyconsults@gmail.com



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MINISTRY OF LANDS, HOUSING AND COUNTRY PLANNING

SIERRA LEONE LAND ADMINISTRATION PROJECT (P177031)

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT – PROCURMENT SPECIALIST

1. Background

The Government of Sierra Leone with support from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank is implementing the Sierra Leone Land Administration Project (SLLAP), financed through a US\$ 41.1 million grant. The proposed Project Development Objective (PDO) is to establish an efficient and accessible land administration system.

The SLLAP will be implementing those parts of the National Land Policy 2015 (NLP) that relate to Land Administration. Currently land in the Provinces is administered through various customary tenure arrangements and land in the Western Area has a system that includes freehold tenure under Statutory Law as seen in most formal systems around the world. In the Western Area, the existing systems rely on a system of registration of instruments (or deeds) at the Office of the Administration and Registrar General (OARG) overseen by the Attorney General under the Ministry of Justice, with boundaries documented through a Cadastral Survey methodology described in the Land Survey Act and administered by the Director of Surveys and Lands within the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning (MLHCP). In 2022, the National Land Commission Act and the Customary Land Rights Act were passed, and they will be implemented with support from the project. The development of a new law that will introduce a Land Title Registration system is included within the NLP, but this has not yet been drafted.

SLLAP will support real estate land property markets for both the private and public sectors. It will assist the work of real estate agents, notaries, licensed surveyors, and lawyers and help build the private sector in these disciplines. It will improve the transparency and security of property rights, which will help address the use of real estate in Sierra Leone and its use for collateral and mortgage purpose. It will speed-up the real estate transaction processes and aim to reduce transaction costs as well as protecting property rights of vulnerable groups, women, and customary communities. Another focus is to improve the efficiency of state property management and would continue supporting the various real estate privatization programs in the country. Many of these goals would be supported by making real estate market information accessible through information technology and linkage with e-Government initiatives.

Following years of civil turmoil between 1991 and 2002, much of the capacity to manage the land administration system was significantly reduced, with particular impact on the cadastral surveying profession, which is now particularly in need of modernizing and bringing up to professional standards.

The PDO will be delivered through the following project components:

Component 1: Institutional Development and Legal Reform: This component seeks to strengthen Sierra Leone's institutional framework for land administration by supporting the establishment of the National Lands Commission (NLC). The project will support the funding required for office building or renovations (both at the headquarter and district level), organizational development plans and strategies, operational support (vehicles, furniture, equipment), capacity building, assessments, drafting and consultations for relevant land policies, laws, and regulations and public awareness raising.

Component 2: Land Information System: The component supports the overall development of a digital land information system (LIS) in Sierra Leone. The project will finance the required ICT equipment (servers, computers, internet etc.), design and development of a digital LIS with automated land administration processes (which need to be reviewed and simplified); the digitization of land records and cadastral maps and base mapping; and the establishment of a geodetic network.

Component 3: Recording and Registration of Land Tenure Rights

The primary focus of this component is to improve the quality and completeness of the records of land tenure rights and the ease and security with which those rights can be transferred whether by inheritance, sale or lease, or for some other third-party rights. The component will finance survey and registration work in customary areas and linking deeds records and maps in the Western Area.

Component 4: Project Management

This component will finance all expenses required to ensure efficient and transparent project management and coordination. This will entail in particular the financing of hiring of staff for Project Coordination Unit (PCU), operational costs (vehicles, fuel, equipment, workshops, etc.), M&E studies (customer surveys, mid-term review, implementation and completion report), and safeguards studies (social and environmental).

Component 5: Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC): Zero-sum component to mitigate situations of urgent need and allow for the rapid reallocation of funding in the event of a natural disaster or crisis

Objective of the Assignment

The objective of the assignment is to engage a Procurement Specialist to lead procurement related services within the PCU of SLLAP. The Procurement Specialist will work closely with other PCU officers and relevant ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) staff to carry out timely and prudent procurement practices consistent with the World Bank procurement regulations for borrowers and Sierra Leone's procurement laws.

Scope of the Assignment

The Procurement Specialist (PS) shall provide support to the PCU within the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning (MLHCP) in the preparation/updating of the procurement plan in the required format for submission to the World Bank; and also shall provide procurement advice to the PCU and SLLAP partners to ensure that procurement of all works, goods and services are undertaken in accordance with the approved Procurement Plan. In the preparation of the procurement plan, the specialist shall ensure that the contract packaging is effective for project implementation and meets the World Bank criteria.

4. Tasks and Responsibilities

The PS shall carry out the following tasks and responsibilities through the application of sound professional practices and methods;
Implement procurement based on the guidelines and procedures for the conduct of procurement under World Bank funded projects, and the government regulations for the procurement of goods, works and services under the Public Procurement Act 2016 (PPA) of Sierra Leone;
Set up and utilize a simple procurement management tracking system that would monitor the implementation of procurement activities and support the timely provision of regular credible updates and responses to queries; establish and maintain a central procurement filing system, and ensure all related documents are included in the respective files, to ensure ease of retrieval of information and the ease of following the paper trail of procurement by independent external auditors or authorized agents;

Using the World Bank's Standard bidding documents, prepare customized Bidding Documents and Request for Proposals (RFP). These should include standardized forms to be used for International and Local Shopping Methods;

In consultation with the project implementing partners, prepare and update the Project's Annual Procurement Plan detailing contract packages for goods, works and services, the estimated cost for each package, the procurement or selection methods and processing times till completion of each procurement activity;

Monitor procurement implementation and update the procurement plans prepared at the beginning of the financial year, for the procurement of goods and works, and the procurement of consultants' services, annually and whenever it becomes necessary to do so;

Prepare the General Procurement Notice (GPN), and also Specific Procurement Notices (SPNs) and Expressions of Interest (EOIs) whenever required;

Establish a register of qualified suppliers and consultants and periodically update this register per advertisements and requests for expressions of interest;

In consultation with the implementation partners and technical officers, coordinate the preparation of Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the preparation of Requests for Proposals (RFPs) on consulting assignments, and specifications for the preparation of bidding documents for goods and works activities, using standard documentation agreed with the funding agencies, and also participating in evaluation of expressions of interest for shortlists and pre-qualification of suppliers and contractors where necessary;

Carry out all procurement processes, including those for International and National Competitive Bidding procedures, ensuring compliance with agreed procurement methods' threshold, prior review requirements specific to the project, and agreed aggregate threshold amounts for less competitive procurement methods;

Receiving and participating in bid opening sessions, evaluating goods and works bids and consultants' proposals and ensuring that the appropriate guidelines are followed to arrive at the recommendations for award to suppliers, contractors and consultants;

In case of procurement actions requiring IDA "no objection", use Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP) to submit the request and monitor IDA response time on issuing "no objections" at different levels of the procurement process and follow-up accordingly;

Coordinate response to inquiries, and communicate result of the evaluation process to the applicants, in response to guidelines;

Prepare minutes of the Evaluation Panel meetings, and also prepare the requests for "no objection", and coordinate arrangements for the negotiation process, where necessary;

Prepare the final contracts, and ensure timely distribution of all relevant procurement and contract documents to all stakeholders (Technical Officers, Consultants, Suppliers Contractors and the World Bank);

Establish a performance monitoring database for all suppliers, contractors, consultants, and ensure efficiency and timeliness in the delivery of outputs from the services providers;

Carry out any other relevant periodic duties that may be assigned by the leadership of the Project.

Performance Criteria

The following performance criteria will be used to assess the performance of the Procurement Specialist at regular interval and based upon which the contract may be continued or reviewed after Post Procurement Assessments are done laying emphasis on quality control and assurance:

Quality of documentation prepared and submitted for prior and post reviews;

Meeting deadlines as indicated in the activity schedule roadmaps on STEP;

Adhering to the World Bank Procurement Regulations and National laws.

Line Management

The PS shall report directly to the Project Coordinator of the SLLAP Project at MLHCP.

Duration of the services

The duration of the assignment is for an initial period of one (1) year, including a three month probation and upon performance an extension can be granted.

Minimum Education and Experience:

A minimum Master's degree in Procurement and/or Supply Chain Management, Business Administration, Public Administration, Economics, Development Management, Social Sciences or a related field;

At least ten (10) years professional experience in procurement and minimum of five (5) years' experience as a procurement specialist in handling, managing or overseeing procurement for World Bank, or other international donor funded or administered projects;

Excellent interpersonal skills, sound judgment, communication skills, training experience, ability to identify and resolve policy and operational constraints;

Demonstrated computer skills and knowledge of Microsoft Office;

Integrity and Confidentiality;

Very good report writing and presentation skills;

Reporting and time schedules

The Specialist will prepare Monthly, Quarterly, Semi-Annual and Annual procurement reports as inputs into the Project Management Reports and, in addition, prepares other reports, as and when needed.

Interested and suitably qualified persons are encouraged to submit their Cover Letters and CV's on or before the 6th of November, 2023 at 4:00pm, using the following email address: sllaproject@gmail.com, copying alphajohcham@yahoo.com, mayatbah@gmail.com, aburaymond@yahoo.com joejoe7787@yahoo.com



Local Open Tender

24/10/23

Contract title: Supply, Delivery, and Installation of Equipment, Furniture, and a 30 KVA Generator for Pujehun District Council Guest House in Pujehun Town Under the Grant title: Empowered Pujehun District Council for efficient service delivery to the Citizens: FED/2019/413-374

Publication reference: PDC/EU/SUP/2023/005

The Pujehun District Council received a grant from the EU Under the Support to Civil Society and Local Authorities for local development in Sierra Leone” Project: FED/2018/039-030’ with financial assistance from the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), titled *Empowered Pujehun District Council for efficient service delivery to the Citizens: FED/2019/413-374* and intends to award a supply contract for the Supply, Delivery, and Installation of Equipment, Furniture, and a 30 KVA Generator for Pujehun District Council Guest House in Pujehun town.

The tender dossier is available at Pujehun District Council Offices, Jah Street, Pujehun District, for inspection. Interested parties can then purchase the Tender Dossier at a cost of SLL 1000,00.

The deadline for submission of bids is 11:30 PM on the 22nd November, 2023. Possible additional information or clarifications/questions shall be provided to those tenderers who will purchase the tender dossier.

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Isatu Bangura

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INT'L SPORT

Luis Diaz: Major military and police search under way for Liverpool player's father

A major military and police search is under way in Colombia for the father of Liverpool forward Luis Diaz, with the authorities offering a £40,000 reward for information leading to his rescue. More than 120 soldiers, plus police, searched northern Colombia for Luis Manuel Diaz on Sunday, amid reports armed men had taken him and his wife.

The player's mother, Cilenis Marulanda, was found in Barrancas on Saturday.

Diaz was absent from the Liverpool side which beat Nottingham Forest on Sunday.

The army said it had set up roadblocks and deployed two motorised platoons, unmanned aircraft, helicopters and a plane with radar in the search for his father.

The Colombian authorities have not provided details about the reported kidnapping, but local media said Diaz's mother and father were taken by armed men on motorcycles at a gas

station in Barrancas, their home town, which is in La Guajira, the country's northern region.

Colombia President Gustavo Petro said "all the public forces have been deployed" to find Diaz's father.

Speaking on Sunday, the director of the National Police, General William Rene Salamanca, announced a reward of "up to 200m pesos" (about £40,000) for information.

Attorney General Francisco Barbosa said he had contacted Diaz twice to provide the 26-year-old with updates on the investigation.

Barbosa told Diaz that information has been obtained regarding the possibility that his father could be in Venezuela - a situation which, Barbosa said, would require intervention by President Petro.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp dedicated Sunday's 3-0 Premier League victory over Forest to Diaz,



saying they had won "for our brother". Surrounded by his team-mates, Diogo Jota held up Diaz's number seven shirt after scoring Liverpool's first goal.

Liverpool said before the game that

they were "aware of an ongoing situation" involving the family of Diaz and that his welfare "will continue to be our immediate priority".

<https://www.bbc.com/sport/football>

Newcastle's £52m star Sandro Tonali is BANNED for the rest of the season

Newcastle star Sandro Tonali has been banned from football for 10 months for illegal betting, the Italian FA has announced.

The midfielder will be ruled out for the rest of the season after reaching a plea bargain, with his lawyers having negotiated with prosecutors and the Italian football federation this week to finalise details of the ban.

Italian FA chief Gabriele Gravina confirmed an agreement had been reached for a 10-month ban, including eight months of therapy, and praised Tonali's collaboration in the process.

An agreement has already been reached between the Federal Prosecutor's Office and Sandro Tonali, which occurred before the referral, therefore it must be endorsed by the undersigned, which I have already done,' Gravina told reporters.

'A plea bargain is envisaged for 18 months of which 8 months is activity recovery, some concerns therapeutic activity and at least 16 face-to-face meetings as testimony.

'A plea bargain is foreseen, mitigating circumstances are foreseen, the boys collaborated beyond belief, so we continue to respect the rules we have set for ourselves.'

Tonali was interviewed last week at the Turin prosecutor's office, where he reportedly spoke to investigators for around two and a half hours.

Initial reports suggested Tonali was at risk of a 12-month ban after claims he had bet on AC Milan matches while on their books, before his £52million summer move to Newcastle.

However, his admission of guilt and



willingness to seek treatment for what his agent calls a 'gambling addiction' is believed to have helped him reduce the ban. It is also said he did not bet on Milan to lose matches.

Tonali's suspension is set to include eight months of therapy and his participation in anti-gambling initiatives.

The midfielder is expected to be free to train with Newcastle during his suspension, which is set to run until late August of next year.

He will miss Euro 2024 and the early weeks of the Premier League season.

Tonali's suspension had not arrived before Newcastle's Champions League tie against Dortmund on Wednesday, which allowed the midfielder to be involved.

It is thought UEFA did not want Tonali to feature but were powerless without confirmation of the ban from Italy.

Tonali came off the bench to replace Sean Longstaff after 65 minutes with Newcastle 1-0 down courtesy of Felix Nmecha's first half strike.

However, he couldn't help to inspire a comeback as they suffered the first

defeat of their Champions League campaign this season.

Tonali had also featured against Crystal Palace in Newcastle's Premier League match last weekend, after the Premier League club had confirmed the midfielder was

being investigated.

The Magpies have pledged their support to the Italian international and his family, with manager Eddie Howe last week vowing that the club will throw their arms around him.

'Sandro is a top, top person and a top character,' Eddie Howe said. 'I've got no doubts about him as a person at all. But like anybody, you don't know everything about every person. It's impossible to.'

'Like all human beings, they can have vulnerabilities and weaknesses and things that happen in our lives that are difficult.'

Newcastle are yet to comment on reports in Italy of a clause that exists in the 23-year-old's contract which means they do not have to pay him during the ban.

However, the club are assessing all legal options and their lawyers will be exploring if they have a case for compensation, given they paid Milan £52m for a player who had already committed betting offences, including gambling on his own teams to win matches.

Tonali is part of a wider investigation

launched by Italian authorities, with the midfielder and Aston Villa's Nicolo Zaniolo having been interviewed when on international duty earlier this month.

Italy head coach Luciano Spalletti called the raid 'traumatic' and described his players as 'absolutely distraught' by the investigation.

Reports in Italy stated that after meeting with prosecutors over alleged sporting offences, Tonali is then thought to have spoken to criminal prosecutor Manuela Pedrotta, who is spearheading an investigation into a betting ring on illegal online platforms. Tonali is believed to have cooperated fully with the parallel investigation.

Juventus midfielder Nicolo Fagioli became the first player to speak directly to prosecutors after news broke two weeks ago, and the 22-year-old was subsequently handed a seven-month ban from football.

Fagioli's ban was a significant reduction on the expected three years handed to those found guilty of similar infringements.

The youngster's ban is 12 months in total but five of those are suspended, with Fagioli ordered to have at least six months of treatment to cure his gambling habit. He was also fined £10,850.

The rules on betting are strict in Italy with athletes banned from betting on their own sports.

Anyone found guilty of breaching them could be hit with worldwide suspensions of up to three years.

Cooperating with this investigation, though, could help those involved secure lesser sentences.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football>

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